United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1081
18 February 1992

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General expresses "grave concern" over Middle East incidents and urges all sides to refrain from violence.

- Secretary-General proposes immediate deployment of United Nations Protection Force to Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) for initial period of twelve months with possibility of renewal of mandate until negotiated settlement is reached.

- United Nations Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on framework convention on climate change begins ten-day session in New York.

- United Nations mission goes to Mogadiscio to assess conditions for distribution of humanitarian assistance.

- United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator reports "severe and unprecedented" snowstorms devastating parts of Lebanon.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today in a statement that he viewed with grave concern the events that had taken place in the Middle East in recent days and which had led to an escalation of violence in the area. He said he strongly deplored the loss of innocent lives.

The Secretary-General went on to say that at a time when negotiations aimed at achieving a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict were under way restraint should be exercised. He urged all sides to refrain from violence, which could only serve to hamper the peace process and to heighten tension in an already volatile region.

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The Secretary-General has proposed that the Security Council authorize the immediate deployment of a United Nations peace-keeping force in Yugoslavia

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-- to be known as the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) -- for an initial period of twelve months, with a possibility for a renewal of the mandate if a negotiated settlement is not reached during that time.

In his report, dated 15 February, the Secretary-General said the Force would succeed only if the Yugoslav parties were committed to engage seriously in the difficult task of negotiating an overall settlement in the Conference on Yugoslavia established by the European Community. This required a working cease-fire and a "clear and unconditional acceptance" of the peace plan by all concerned, "with equally clear assurances of their readiness to cooperate in its implementation". The Secretary-General added that fears that the Force might be withdrawn before the underlying problems have been peacefully resolved "would have a most unsettling effect in the United Nations protected areas".

Mr. Boutros-Ghali further said he had come to the conclusion that the resistance to the plan by Milan Babic, leader of the Serbian communities in the Krajina, should not be allowed to "block" his recommendation. He noted that the opposition to the plan none the less constituted "a potential danger" to its implementation.

The UNPROFOR will have its headquarters in Sarajevo and will be deployed in four sectors in the already existing United Nations protected areas. It will include over 13,000 military, police and civilian personnel placed under the command of the Force Commander, yet to be appointed by the Secretary-General.
(S/23592)

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The United Nations Intergovernmental Committee concerned with the drafting of a framework convention on climate change began its ten-day session at Headquarters today.

Among the issues under consideration are new scientific findings revealing that chlorofluorocarbons -- known as CFCs -- may not be making a net contribution to global warming as had previously been thought. This has lead to a renewed emphasis on carbon dioxide build-up as the main contributor to the greenhouse effect.

According to the new data, the world's climate will "warm up" by between 2 and 5 degrees Celcius over the next century if no action is taken to deal with what is being referred to as the "enhanced greenhouse effect". Rising sea levels and changes in rainfall and evaporation patterns are among the results scientists believe would accompany such a temperature shift. An accumulation in the atmosphere of gases produced by human activity since the industrial revolution is cited as the cause.

Among those participating in the negotiations are some of the world's poorest countries, including small island States, countries from Africa's Sahelian region and others with heavily populated river deltas. While they

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have not helped cause global warming and can do little to alleviate it, they risk devastation if their water-tables are contaminated by rising sea levels, their farmlands turn to desert or their rivers flood. They are seeking commitments, as a matter of urgency, to bring global warming under control, and are asking the industrialized countries to assist them in defending themselves against some of its already inevitable consequences.

The framework convention is one of the international instruments expected to be signed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development scheduled to take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, during the first two weeks of June.

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A United Nations spokesman told correspondents today that a six-member United Nations humanitarian mission had been sent to Mogadiscio over the weekend to assess the conditions for the distribution of assistance.

While indiscriminate shelling of the civilian population in the Somali capital had stopped, a small airport north of the city was still under bombardement. The mission members would return to Nairobi today to make their report.

In a separate announcement, the spokesman said the Security Council was holding consultations this afternoon to hear a briefing by Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, Chairman of the Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament, on Iraqi non-compliance with resolution 707 (1991) and 715 (1991).

* * *

"Severe and unprecedented" snowstorms throughout the first two weeks of February have devastated parts of Lebanon and left many areas totally isolated, according to the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization.

In an appeal issued on Friday, the Agency reported that a number of people had died in the storms and that many were injured. UNDRO had allocated an emergency relief grant of $20,000 for the local purchase of needed materials and was assessing the extent of the damage caused by the storms. Food and medical supplies were needed, as well as snow removal equipment and fuel, UNDRO said.

The Lebanese Government has appealed to the United Nations for international relief.

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Prepared by Central News

DH/1082
19 February 1992

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council, in Presidential statement, deplores "renewed and rising cycle of violence" in southern Lebanon and elsewhere in the region, particularly recent killings; urges all concerned to exercise "maximum restraint".

- Security Council welcomes Secretary-General's decision to sent special mission to Iraq to seek unconditional agreement to implement all obligations under cease-fire resolution and to stress serious consequences if such agreement is not forthcoming.

- In opening statement at anti-apartheid committee meeting, Secretary-General says it is now possible to envisage "new society" in South Africa "which respects human rights".

- While in Iran on week-long visit in pursuit of peaceful settlement of Afghan question, Secretary-General's Personal Representative for that region meets with Iranian, Pakistani and Central Asian leaders, as well as with Afghan resistance leaders in Iran.

- Italy offers to host 1993 World Summit on Human Rights.

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The Security Council met this afternoon in a formal meeting at the request of Lebanon which had asked for an urgent convening of the Council in response to recent developments.

In a Presidential statement at the meeting, Council President Thomas R. Pickering of the United States said Council members were deeply concerned about the "renewed and rising cycle of violence in southern Lebanon and elsewhere in the region". The Council deplored in particular the recent killings and the continued violence which threatened to claim additional lives and to destabilize the region further.

By the statement, the members of the Council called upon all parties involved to exercise maximun restraint in order to bring the violence to an

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end. They reaffirmed their commitment to the full sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries, as set out in resolution 425 (1978). They asserted that "any State shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations".

The Council expressed its continued support for all efforts to bring peace to the region and urged all the parties concerned to work vigorously to enhance the ongoing peace process.

In the letter requesting the urgent convening of the Council, the Lebanese Permanent Representative, Khalil Makkawi, had cited "the latest acts of aggression by Israel against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon and its continuous occupation of southern Lebanon and part of the Bekaa". Mr. Makkawi said the aggressions and occupation constituted a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and Security Council resolutions and posed a "grave threat" to international peace and security.

The letter, which was addressed to the Council President, was dated 17 February. (S/23604)

In a related development, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Ilter Türkmen, has issued a statement deploring Israeli air raids on two Palestine refugee camps in southern Lebanon in the early hours of Sunday, 16 February.

According to the statement, the bombings of the Ein el Hilweh and the Rashidieh camps, which house respectively 34,000 and 20,000 Palestinian refugees, had killed four civilians and wounded ten.

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Members of the Security Council have endorsed a proposal by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali that a special mission, headed by the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament, Rolf Ekeus, be dispatched to Iraq immediately.

The mission will meet with high-level representatives of the Iraqi Government with the view of securing its unconditional agreement to implement all its obligations under resolution 687 (1991), which set the conditions for the cease-fire in the Gulf war.

The Secretary-General's proposal was submitted to the Security Council together with the Special Commission's latest report on Iraqi compliance with resolutions 707 and 715 (1991) during Council consultations yesterday. In its report, the Commission called for "firm action" by the Council, noting that if such action was delayed, in the face of Iraq's repeated refusal to acknowledge any obligations under those resolutions, "the more intransigent the Government's position is likely to become".

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In a Presidential statement issued today, members of the Council said Iraq's failure to acknowledge its obligations under resolutions 707 (1191) and 715 (1991); its rejection of ongoing monitoring and verification; and its failure to provide the full, final and complete disclosure of its weapons capabilities constituted a continuing material breach of the relevant provisions of the cease-fire resolution.

The statement called for the unconditional agreement by Iraq to implement those obligations, saying it was one of the essential preconditions for the Council to reconsider the prohibitions imposed on the country. The Council urged the mission to stress to the Iraqi Government the serious consequences that will ensue if such agreement is not forthcoming.

By its statement, the Council asked the Secretary-General to report back to the Council on the results of the special mission when it returns.

In related news today, the Secretary-General has appointed Ambassador Michael H. Newlin (United States) as Deputy Executive Chairman of the Special Commission on Iraqi disarmament. He is replacing Robert L. Gallucci, who has been recalled by his Government.
(S/23606)

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The system of apartheid in South Africa was crumbling under the combined pressure of internal and external forces, and it was now possible to envisage a new society in South Africa -- one which respected human rights, did not discriminate on grounds of colour, sex, religion or political affiliation, and in which all shared economic wealth. That was stated by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali yesterday, as he opened the first meeting of the Special Committee Against Apartheid at Headquarters.

The Secretary-General went on to say that courageous political steps had been taken in South Africa in the past two years; among them were the repeal of major apartheid laws and the repatriation of exiles. The launching of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa had marked a new stage in the political life of the country, he said. The presence of the United Nations at that Convention last December signified its full support for the process.

Among others addressing the Committee, the re-elected Chairman, Ibrahim A. Gambari of Nigeria, urged that restrictions on oil and arms be maintained until a new constitution was adopted and a democratically elected government installed in South Africa. During the next few months, he said, the Special Committee would closely monitor developments in South Africa, paying particular attention to the underlying causes of violence and issuing early warnings if necessary.

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The Secretary-General's Personal Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Bonon Sevan, has returned to Pakistan from a week-long visit to

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Iran, in connection with his talks with leaders of the region on a peaceful settlement of the Afghan question.

While in Teheran, Mr. Sevan met with Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Alaedin Bourujerdi, and other senior officials. He also met with the Afghan resistance leaders of the Iran-based Hezb-e-Wahdat and with commanders of resistance from western Afghanistan whom he briefed on the plans to convene a gathering ("Ijlas") of Afghans outside the region. Such a gathering would seek the agreement of the parties to a transition mechanism, leading to the establishment of a government through free and fair elections.

Mr. Sevan also met with the Foreign Ministers of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, as well as the President of the Parliament of Uzbekistan, who all expressed the support of their respective Governments for a peaceful settlement of the Afghan settlement. He reiterated the Secretary-General's call to all Governments concerned to halt not only the supply of arms to all sides but also the financing of arms purchases. In response, the three Central Asian leaders gave assurances that no such arms tranfers were taking place.

Throughout his visit to Iran, Mr. Sevan's interlocutors expressed deep anxieties about growing ethnic tensions inside Afghanistan. Last week in Kabul, the Personal Representative warned that "if a political solution to the Afghan question is not found within the current year, there is a real threat that the territorial integrity of Afghanistan will be irreparably shattered".

Before his departure from Teheran, Mr. Sevan paid tribute to the Government and people of Iran both for the generosity shown to the almost three million Afghan refugees over the past thirteen years, and for their continued support for the Secretary-General's efforts.

The Personal Representative met in Teheran also with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mian Nawaz Sharif, and the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Siddique Khan Kanju.

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Italy has announced that it is willing to host the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. The offer came yesterday in Geneva where the Commission on Human Rights is currently holding its forty-eighth session, following an announcement by the German Government that it was unable to meet the requirements for the hosting of the Conference.

The Human Rights Commission will be meeting through 6 March.

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